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The Role of Pashto (as L1) and Urdu (as L2) in English Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Pashto is one of the dominant languages in the north of Pakistan. Its speakers prefer to communicate in L1 with their peers in non-pashto speaking regions like Lahore, which is the capital city of Punjab, Pakistan. Along with Pashto, they communicate in Urdu (the national language) and English (the most prestigious academic language) for higher education, employment and business. With this background in mind, the current study investigates: (a) what are the common syntactic properties (sentence structure, aspect, preposition, article and mood) in Pashto, Urdu and English languages?, (b) What are the advantages and/ or disadvantages to Pashto speakers in English language learning? and (c) What is the potential role of Urdu in English language learning? Linguistic Proximity Model was used as a theoretical framework to analyze the data. The data was gathered from 19 Bachelor of Science Pashto students of different programs from three universities located in Lahore. The participants were asked to translate sentences from Urdu to English and from Pashto to English to find interference of both Pashto and Urdu in learning the English language. Unlike many studies, the present study negates the facilitative role of background languages in learning the target language. Apparently, although Urdu serves as a base for learning the English language, the present study recommends an independent investigation to explore the role of the Urdu language in learning English.

Keywords: English language learning, linguistic interference, Pashto, typology, Urdu

Introduction

The prior knowledge of language learners has been considered as an important factor in acquisition of other languages (Ringbom, 2007; Du, 2016). The impact of previously acquired languages on the new language learning was initially addressed within the discipline of second language acquisition (SLA). However, the increasing awareness of bi- or multilingualism prevalence in many parts of the world (Potowski & Rothman, 2011) has led to the emergence of

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Third language acquisition (TLA) as another relatively new branch of the language acquisition studies (Jessner, 2008; Falk & Bardel, 2010; García-Mayo, 2012; Fuente & Lacroix, 2015). The phenomenon of tri-lingualism is considered ‘more complex’ rather ‘basically different’ from that of bilingualism (Voorwinde, 1981: 25). Pakistan is also a country of multi-lingual speakers where Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Saraiki, Urdu and Balochi are some of the major languages. Urdu-as national language serves the purpose of communication among diverse linguistic groups as well as on social and higher national platforms. English, on the other hand, is the medium of instruction especially at education institutions. Generally, people use their mother tongue for intra-community communication, Urdu for wider social use and English for academic purposes (Rafi, 2017). Hence, people due to multiple reasons acquire non-native languages for their survival nationally and globally.

Pashto is the second-largest regional language of Pakistan which is spoken in ‘Khyber Pakhtunkwa Province, Peshawar district and Yusufzai area, federally administered Tribal areas, mainly central and northern areas, Punjab province, Mianwali district and all along Afghanistan border’ (SIL International, 2017). Pashto speakers, particularly in Lahore, having Pashto as their mother tongue are language learners of Urdu and English. However, we cannot place their learning of both languages, Urdu and English on a continuum of L2 or L3 (and it is discouraged by Hammarberg, 2010 to label non-native language in a linear chronological order which negatively simplifies the situation) as some learners have previously acquired or have been acquiring Urdu simultaneously with English language. They in addition to their mother tongue have learnt Urdu for day to day communication and find it obligatory as well as challenging to learn the language of instruction and assessment, i.e. English at their educational institution.

English considered as the most esteemed second language (Rahman, 1999) on socio-economic and political grounds is perceived as an indispensable tool to survive in the global community (Paik, 2008). Even in Pakistan, students who are proficient in English have the advantage over others in seeking admissions in renowned institutions as well as in job interviews (Zeeshan, 2013; Rasheed, Zeeshan & Zaidi, 2017). Pashto speakers who have been communicating in their regional language throughout their initial academic years find many challenges in learning English language, which in many syntactic aspects is different from Pashto language (see table 1), when they come to metropolitan cities like Lahore for higher education. They learn or have already learnt to speak Urdu with their co-students. The instructors themselves, mostly, are unable to speak Pashto so they use Urdu or English for communication.

While learning English language, Pashto as L1 and Urdu as L2 seem to play a crucial role in their overall language learning. Past research in the field of language acquisition reveals two-fold impact of prior knowledge on the learning of new languages. The knowledge of background languages which equips the learners with an array of linguistic and cognitive skills have been considered by many researchers as advantageous to them in developing competency for the target language learning. It may condition the way they approach and learn a new language. Conversely, the language transfer has also been referred as negatively affecting the language learning process particularly when languages are distant or dissimilar (Odlin, 2003; Jarvis,

2015). It can equally debilitate the learning process if the pre-existing knowledge intervenes negatively complicating the process of language learning. Pashto speakers, like any other language learner in their attempt of learning a new language are speculated to connect the new elements to whatever linguistic knowledge they already have. Both intra-linguistic and cross-linguistic knowledge has its impact on the learning of new language.

Therefore, the study attempts to investigate the cross-linguistic influence in the context of the aforementioned languages which takes into account both the similarities as well as the differences across languages. The present study draws on the psycholinguistic perspective on language transfer. In this regard, typology –the similarities and differences between the languages, has been considered as playing a major role in language learning (Cenoz, 2001; Rothman, 2011; Fuente & Lacroix, 2015), from where stems the first two questions of the current study (see research question a and b). While learning an L2, either there is materialization of transfer or not, if it occurs the possible impact is only from the L1. However, in case of learning a third language, both languages which are already acquired may be the source of potential influence (Garcia-Mayo, 2012; Rothman & Halloran, 2013). Hammarberg (2001) even proposes that L2 supposedly could influence the learning of L3 even more than L1, which generates the third question of the present study and leads to investigate the role of L2 (Urdu) as well in English language learning. In the light of the aforementioned context the current study aims at investigating

- a) The common syntactic properties (Sentence Structure, Aspect, Preposition, The Use of Article, and Mood) in Pashto, Urdu and English languages.
- b) The advantages and disadvantages to Pashto speakers in learning English.
- c) The role of Urdu in English language learning.

The study has implications for both Pashto learners of English language and Language teachers as providing them an insight into the phenomenon of potential cross-linguistic influence and the particular characteristics of language learners, therefore acknowledging and addressing the diverse facets of acquisition which earlier went unnoticed. Understanding of the possible role of the background languages in the English language learning may help to strategize the learning process and guide them towards the facilitative rather than debilitative path. Pauwels (2014) points out that up till now even language teachers have been unable to understand the role of unique characteristics of multilingual learners, which if engaged properly and proactively may assist manifolds in language learning.

The study is significant as cross-linguistic interference in the context of Pashto speakers has not been much researched. Second, the parallel drawn by the study among three languages, i.e. Pashto, Urdu and English is also distinct. Third, the study is focusing on the syntactic properties of the above-mentioned languages whereas Pashto language has been mostly investigated in pronunciation only and much research is required regarding syntax as the proficiency in syntactic features of any language leads to proper sentence building and hence facilitates the learning of syntax.

The current research deals with Cross-linguistic interference and TLA (acquisition and learning are used synonymously in the article in line with the modern trend, for details see Ellis, 2005 and Jessner, 2009) in the case of Pashto speakers having Pashto and Urdu as their background languages. In this regard, the current study has come up with a unique pairing of language to shed light on the intricacies of TLA, and deal with the issues of linguistic typology and the role of L2 which is still lacking.

Literature Review

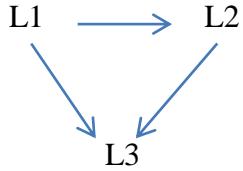
This section first sheds light on third language acquisition (TLA) and what it means to be a multilingual learner while cross lingual interference, particularly, the role of two factors, linguistic typology and the role of L2 which are mainly dealt in psycholinguistic approach towards TLA has been discussed in detail.

Third Language Acquisition

Third language acquisition (TLA) is a relatively new dimension of SLA studies yet it is speedily thriving over a last score of years (Cenoz, 2013). TLA research endeavours to draw linkages within background languages and their potential role in language learning while underscoring the differences between L2 learning and L3 learning. According to Cenoz (2003) "...third language acquisition refers to the acquisition of a non-native language by learners who have previously acquired or are acquiring two other languages" (71). De Angelis (2007) calls it 'third or additional language acquisition' which means learning of all languages beyond the L2. TLA focuses on the intra-lingual or cross-lingual influences (CLI) and a lot of research has been undertaken recently to provide further insight into language learning at phonological, syntactic and lexical pedestals (De Angelis, 2007; Hammarberg, 2009). Various perspectives have been adopted by different researchers to address the phenomenon which are discussed in the following. TLA has been observed through different lenses: Cenoz (2009) and Rivers and Golonka (2009) viewed it from educational perspectives in terms of age factor, language usage and educational contexts; Rothman (2010) and Garcia-Mayo and Rothman (2012) adopted formal linguistic perspective, Bhatia and Ritchie (2013) focused on the sociolinguistic aspects, and Bardle and Falk (2012) concentrated on neuro-linguistic side of TLA, etc.

Cross Linguistic Interference

The studies on Cross-linguistic Influence (CLI) mostly deal with the psycholinguistic aspects of the prior linguistic knowledge on the target language acquisition (De Angelis, 2007). CLI was initially the focus of Second language acquisition research where the role of L1 was gauged on the L2, i.e. L1→L2. However, when a learner has already acquired two languages, the influence on L3 would be from L1 as well as L2 or both as depicted below:



De Angelis (2007) considers multilingualism as challenging where it is difficult to ascertain which background language would be the preferred source of information in the TLA. However, the study of multilingualism in TLA is unique in contextualizing the learner in the arena of his L1 and L2 or all previously acquired languages and then comprehend the potential impact of background languages on language learning. It also concentrates on number of previously inquired questions about full/ partial or no transfer. However, it draws on the previously acquired languages as source of inter-lingual interference, focusing heavily on determining the role of background languages in TLA. Several factors which have been identified as playing a key role in multilingual learning include the knowledge and recent use of background languages, status of L2, proficiency level, typological proximity and the age of acquisition, etc. (De Angelis & Selinker, 2001; Cenoz, 2003).

The Role of Background Language

Multilingualism has been promoted around the globe for a score of years, and multilinguals have been considered as having superior meta-linguistic and meta-cognitive abilities (Cenoz, 2003; De Angelis, 2007) which in turn has led to in-depth analysis of multi-lingual learning process. Cenoz (2013) while arguing whether 'bilinguals have advantages over monolinguals when learning an additional language' establishes that background knowledge makes them more experienced and is helpful to them in forming new knowledge. He gives an analogy of walking (L1) to learning how to drive (L2) and then to a broader task of driving a bus (L3), where prior knowledge of driving a vehicle can be quite useful in the next challenge of driving a bus as compared to a complete novice.

Falk and Bardle (2010) presented a model of how background languages and other factors play their role in language acquisition at L1, L2 and L3 levels, which reveals that the more the background knowledge, the more the potential sources of interferences in Multilingualism. The Figure 1 clearly shows that while learning L1, there is less influences on the learning process, while the influence increases during the learning of L2. In the acquisition of L3, the potential sources of influence are many including L1 and L2, hence complicating the overall learning process as shown below:

Prerequisites for language acquisition

Input



L1

L1 acquisition

Prerequisites for language acquisition

Input

Encyclopaedic knowledge



L2 acquisition

Prerequisites for language acquisition

Input

Encyclopaedic knowledge



L1

L2

Experiences and strategies acquired during L2 acquisition

L3 acquisition

Figure 1

L1, L2 and L3 acquisition (presented by Falk & Bardle, 2010)

Typology

Typology is the distance between languages and families of various languages. It describes the ‘ad hoc similarity of certain linguistic structures’ between languages (Neuser, 2017: 61). The role of typology has also been investigated in TLA where some of the research shows positive effects of similar languages. The closer a background language is to the target language, the greater the chances are that it will act as a source for transfer, though research also reveals instances of non-transfer from a typologically closely related language too (Hakansson, Pienemann & Sayehli, 2002). Foote (2009) conducted a study on three groups of multilingual language learners to investigate the role of L2 and typology in L3 transfer. The findings reveal that language distance plays a key role in CLI. On the other hand, Llama, Cardoso and Collins (2010) conducted their research on two groups of Spanish learners who had English and French as their L1 and L2 and vice versa. They concluded that typology does not play any role in TLA.

The status of L2

In the process of TLA, the role of L1 and L2 is still under discussion. Lindqvist (2009) cites Williams and Hammarberg (1998) who mention two roles of L2 as ‘instrumental role’- supporting pragmatically functional ways or a supplier role- providing with linguistic materials such as words. Hammarberg (2001) refers to the status of L2 as “a desire to suppress L1 as being ‘non-foreign’ and to rely rather on an orientation towards a prior L2 as a strategy to approach the L3” (37). In this regard, Williams and Hammarberg (2009) conducted a study which revealed that when learners produce L3, there are more traces of activation of L2 rather L1. In case a learner has more than one L2, one of the second languages may suppress the other L2 on the pedestal of several factors such as proficiency in that language, language distance and the language more in use. Bardel and Falk (2007) also propose that the same phenomenon working in vocabulary acquisition may occur in the acquisition of syntax (L3). However, the reasons for the upper hand role of L2 are still hypothetical. They assert that regardless of language distance and similarities, L3 acquisition heavily draws upon L2 because there are certain cognitive variations in mental representation and storage of L1 and L2. They also claim that L2 is easily available as it is stored in declarative memory. De Angelis (2007) explains two reasons for that, first, perhaps, it is due to more association of later language as being foreign, hence, remote from their native language. Second is the perception of ‘correctness’ that the knowledge of L1 is unfitting in the scenario of L2.

Some past research has been presented in the subsequent section which indicates some of the work done so far in TLA, typological distance and the role of L2 in language learning. Cawalho and Silva (2006) investigated the typological distance and the order of acquisition in Spanish-English learners of Portuguese as L3. Portuguese present and future subjunctive was primarily focused. The results showed that both group (one having Spanish as L1 and English as L2 as well as other having English as L1 and Spanish as L2) used Spanish in their task affirming the role of linguistic similarity.

Hanafi (2014) in her study ‘The second language influence on foreign language learners’ errors’, emphasized the cross-lingual errors in tri-lingual learners, where she studied the role of French as L2 in English language learning by the Algerian students through text-translation method. The result revealed that the French language as L2 performs a facilitative role in English language learning.

Kopeckova (2016) conducted a study to investigate the L3phonological development of German learners having English as L2 and learning Spanish language. The results reveal a facilitative effect of background languages whereas linkages have been found out between L2 and L3 phonology. Cenoz (2001) also investigated the role of different variables in L3 acquisition. She focused on English as L3 learners having Spanish or /and Basque as their L1. The results divulged that intra-lingual patterns as well as psychotypological distance play a role in TLA, but the nature of the impact is mixed, at times influencing positively and, sometimes, hampering the process too.

The aforementioned review of the studies reveals that there is not much research on Syntax in TLA available though they are addressing the areas of lexicon, phonology, etc. Moreover, research in the same field is also required in Pakistani context investigating the cross-linguistic influences in the background of the local languages. Particularly, this unique combination of Pashto-Urdu-English has not been studied so far, hence, indicating a gap. The current study highlights the need for such research in Pakistan and undertakes the task of finding the potential impact of the background languages of the Pashto learners in learning a third language i.e. English.

Theoretical Model

This study draws on the ‘Linguistic Proximity Model’ (LPM) presented by Westergaard, Mitrofanova, Mykhaylyk and Rodina (2016). This framework suggests, firstly, that during the course of third language acquisition, all background languages remain constantly available to the language learner. Therefore, the researcher understands that when the learner would be translating from the Urdu language to English, even then Pashto language remains accessible to the learner in the background hence, the linguistic product would not be devoid of the impact of L1 thus affecting the explanation of the overall role of L2. Secondly, the cross linguistic interference may be rooted into the similarities or overlapping features among grammars during the acquisition process. It reflects that both background languages might be the cause of CLI. Thirdly, if the structure of the target language is similar to that (or either) of the background language (s), it may facilitate acquisition by allowing the learner to intuitively decide on the basis of background knowledge. Pashto, Urdu and English belong to the same family, i.e. Indo-European language family; even if there are some basic differences in the basic structure or positioning of preposition, etc., there are many similarities which according to the third point of model may intervene in the learning process. Lastly, CLI may not be facilitative when a learner erroneously assumes that a linguistic property may be same in L3 as learnt before in L1 or L2 or both. Hence this framework advocates both the facilitative and non-facilitative influence of background languages understanding that similarities between L1, L2 and L3 play a crucial role in CLI as the previous knowledge of languages is not compartmentalized rather interactive.

Westergaard et al (2016) however, assert that linguistic typology is not a ‘decisive factor’ in CLI. However, the researcher on the basis of the earlier discussion on typology suggests that linguistic typology is also about linguistic similarities and differences, hence unlike the previous notion of typology-based models that complete transfer occurs on the basis of one of the previously acquired languages, suggests that linguistic typology seems to play, if not pivotal, some role in TLA. The LPM model is not different from De Angelis (2007) stance on CLI where he asserts that ‘two or more languages interact with one another and concur in influencing the target language’ (21).

Materials and Methods

Sample of the Study

The data has been collected from 19 BS students studying in three higher education universities in Lahore, Pakistan. The mother tongue of all participants is Pashto while they use Urdu for their daily communication with their non-Pashto speaker friends, at market and general public around them. The medium of instruction as well as assessment in their institutions is English. The purposive sampling method has been used, however, it was tough for the researcher to find participants having these specific multilingual abilities so it turned into snowball sampling as well when I requested the participants to help me find more participants if they know. It was quite successful and many participants were accessed using contacts of earlier consulted participants.

Data Collection tool

Eight sentences were prepared by the researcher keeping in mind that they should reflect all syntactic properties under study. The sentences were in Urdu and Pashto. The participants were to translate these sentences first from Urdu to English and then from Pashto to English to see the impact of Pashto and Urdu in their learning of the English language. The properties such as sentence structure, aspect, mood, preposition, use of article and modality were focused on, in the sentences. Only the written form of their language has been checked for syntax as they, most of the time (except presentations), are assessed on their writing skills.

As unethical choices may lead to unethical results and situations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Newsome, 2016) the researcher adhered to the ethical principles of respecting participant's rights, confidentiality, autonomy, etc. The sample of the study was Pashto speakers so the researcher talked to them in local lingua franca, i.e. Urdu. Some of the participants were reluctant to translate the sentences saying that they do not know English at all so it will not benefit the researcher. They advised the researcher to go to an expert in the English language for translation. Two of the Pashto speakers refused bluntly. So, it was not very easy to collect data, however, I did not insist and respected their right of willing participation. On one hand some of the speakers were very enthusiastic and insisted to devise a communication or grammar course for them and introduced me enthusiastically to some other Pashto speakers as well.

Data Analysis Method

The data is in the form of sentences. In order to systematically analyse the data Qualitative content analysis has been applied. It helps to infer meaning from text and to interpret 'the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). After identifying the particular syntactic properties, the data was labeled into five categories, i.e. structure, preposition, article, tense and mood. The data was coded and frequency was measured to trace the patterns in the data. After the identification of errors and the patterns in the error, they were interpreted under certain themes such as the impact of L1, the Impact of L2, deficient knowledge of target language, etc.

Data Analysis and Findings

A Comparison of Syntactic Properties of Pashto, Urdu and English

Pashto, Urdu and English language, though fall under the same language family, however, there are certain typological differences in their syntactic properties. A detailed comparison in Table 1 reveals that Pashto language is a little more similar to Urdu language, as both have SOV as their basic structure, than English, where English has a structure of SVO. Both languages, Urdu and Pashto have no specific article 'the' or 'an' though 'a' has an approximate replacement.

Table 1. A Comparison of Syntactic Properties of Pashto, Urdu and English Language

	Pashto	Urdu	English
Sentence	SOV	SOV	SVO
Structure		Relatively free word order	
Preposition	Pre-position	Post-positions	Pre-noun positions only
	Post-position	Usually come after noun	I am going to school.
	Pre-post position		(On, at, of, by between, below, above, under, upon, into, etc.) On+ at= 'Par'
Tense	Past	Past	Past
	Present	Present	Present
	(inflection is used to show future activity)	Future (has separate word for future 'ga', 'gi' & 'gy')	Future (there is a separate word 'will' to show future action)
Aspect	Perfective &	Subjunctive, Perfective,	Indefinite, Continuous
	Imperfective	Imperfective	Perfect, Perfect Continuous
Article	No parallel for 'the' 'یو' /yaw is used sometimes for 'a'.	No parallel for 'the' word 'aik' is used sometimes for 'a'.	Use of The, An and A
Mood	Words such as 'بے', 'دے' /de/, بنایی /بنایی/ šayi	'Sakna' (parallel for English can and may), 'chahna',	Can/could, may/might, would/should, etc.

Use of Prepositions

To investigate the role of background languages in English language learning generally and prepositions particularly, the use of six prepositions 'of', 'to', 'in', 'at', 'from' and 'for' by the participants has been gauged. It is observed that except 'at' all other prepositions have been mostly used properly. It may account for that whether pre-positioned or post-positioned, the purpose of preposition remains the same in SOV as well as SVO (Fakhar, 2013). However, the prepositional adjuncts are sometimes either missing or not ordered properly. One of the given sentences was: 'We live in Lahore at Ravi road.'

Seven of the participants translated it correctly with ‘at’ however nine participants translated it as following:

‘We live in Lahore on Ravi road.’

In Urdu there is only one preposition ‘par’ parallel to English preposition ‘at’ and ‘on’. It seems that L2 is playing a role here. While translating ‘a glass of water to your brother’ except a couple of participants, all of them were able to translate the sentences aptly. Urdu and Pashto both have parallel prepositions for both English prepositions; which eventually leads to the almost correct translation from one language to another as suggested by Westergaard et al. (2016) that similarities among languages facilitate learning. In Pashto ‘wror ta’ means to your brother whereas ‘da glass oba’ (a glass of water) serve the same function. Bilal, Tariq, Yaqub and Kanwal (2013) concluded that when some preposition is mismatched to the situation it is mainly due to the intricacies involved in target language and the ‘polysemous nature of prepositions’ rather than inter-language error. Although prepositions are serving the same function in whatever position they occur cross-linguistically, however, a number of errors reflecting mismatched used of preposition reflect that target language, i.e. English has a complex system of preposition

Use of Article

English has a definite article ‘the’ and indefinite ‘a’ and ‘an, absence of which results into ill-formed sentence. These articles do not occur in Pashto or Urdu in the similar way. Some words like ‘aik’ in Urdu and ‘yaw’ in Pashto are somewhat parallel to ‘a’. The findings reveal more frequency of error in the use of article ‘the’ 42/57 errors than in the use of article ‘a’ 29/57 errors. While translating from Urdu language to Pashto language, the errors are more in the use of article ‘the’ (42/57 errors) than in the use of article ‘a’ (29/57 errors). On the other hand, the translation of text from Pashto to English resulted in more errors where 31/57 errors have been recorded in the use of article ‘a’ and 44/57 errors while using ‘the’.

While translating from Pashto a few learners have misused the word ‘one’ instead of writing simply ‘a’. At another place one of the participants used the word ‘a single toffee’ instead of ‘a toffee’. It suggests the lack of knowledge of target language as well as the overtly conscious usage of the native language knowledge (As the fourth point of Linguistic proximity model suggests) particularly in the case of articles. Some language transfer errors have been observed e.g. in the case of articles either definite article (the) was not used where required, or it was replaced with ‘a’ and vice versa.

Aspect

a) Present Indefinite:

While dealing with present indefinite, 15/19 participants correctly translated the sentence from Urdu. However there are some different constructions as follows:

1. We are living on ravi road in Lahore.
2. *We was living in Lahore on Ravi road.
3. *We living in Lahore on Ravi Road.

b) Present Continuous:

10/19 participants translated the sentence having continuous aspect correctly while following are some of the incorrect sentences:

1. *Sara reading a book and eating a oranges.(3 participants)
2. *Sara have reading book and eating oranges.
3. *Sara read book with eat oranges. (3 participants)
4. *Sara is reading a book and eat oranges.

c) Present Perfect:

Only two participants used has+verb 3rd form to express the ‘present perfect’ form of verb. Two of the participants used past indefinite, one used ‘has+verb 1st + ing, three of the participants used has+verb 1st form, and has+ verb 2nd form. Three other participants used is+verb 3rd form. One of the participants translated the sentence into simple present tense.

d) Present Perfect Continuous:

None of the participants used ‘has been’ while translating the sentence from Urdu to English. 10/19 participants used simple continuous tense. 7/19 participants used the verb with ‘ing’ without using any auxiliary, i.e. is /have been. One of the participant simply used ‘is washed’ and the other ‘given’ which distorted the meaning of sentence altogether. None of the participants uses the true formation of ‘has been washing’. Only eight participants used since morning while some of them used ‘from’ and a few of them did not translate ‘subhu say’ at all. It is surprising as Pashto alternate had clear indication ‘sahaara’ (since morning). May be the participants got so much confused due to the overall structure of the sentence that they remained unable to incorporate this phrase.

Sher Khan has been washing his car since morning.

‘*Sher khan is washed the car’.

The findings reveal that most of the errors have been made while translating present perfect continuous as well as Present perfect, although perfective aspect is very much there in Pashto.

Mood

To investigate the use of modal verbs, the participants were given three sentences. The first was:

Can you give a glass of water to your brother?

Kia tum apnay bhai ko pani day sakti ho?

Ta Khopal wror ta da glass oba warka walia shay?

You your brother to of glass water give present can?

13/19 participants translated it aptly from Urdu to English, while translating from Pashto to English, 11/19 participants used 'can' at sentence front position successfully. Urdu has a separate word 'Sakna' and Pashto 'walia shay' as a parallel to English modal verb 'can'. However the rest of the participants translated it using 'will' instead of 'can' and two of the participants wrote:

*Is you give a glass of water to your brother?

*You can give a glass of water to your brother."

This seems a case of background language interference, in this case particularly of L1. Comparing with Pashto version, it is quite noticeable that 'can' forms an interrogative in English at sentence initial position where as the Pahsto interrogative form starts with 'ta' means you and end with 'walia shay' meaning 'saktay ho'(can).

The other sentence was 'You might not pull the car'. None of the participants was able to translate it properly. Some of the responses are given in the following:

1. *You cannot catch the car will be.
2. *May be you not drive car.
3. *Perhaps you cannot pull a car
4. *May you not pull truck.
5. *I hope you don't push a car.

Sentence Structure

The basic structure in English translations has been mostly observed by the participants, however, phrases are often misplaced. Auxiliaries have not been used generally. The sentence where modal verb 'can' was required to come at the sentence initial position to make sentence was not followed by the most of the participants.

Conclusion

The study concludes that typologically Urdu and Pashto have basic structure of SVO, apart from a few exceptions such as prepositions (where pre-position, post-positions and Pre-post-positions occur) both languages are not much different in the treatment of tense, aspect, basic sentence structure and use of article. To make an interrogative sentence, Pashto does not need modal verb 'can' to occur at sentence initial case which is not the case with Urdu language. On the other

hand, English has proper system of articles, the complex use of prepositions where there is a difference between ‘after’ and ‘behind’ or ‘between’ and ‘among’. Sometimes two prepositions join together, e.g. ‘into’ to convey the sense of motion, etc. It is also different from the other two languages in aspect as having four distinct aspects. English modal verbs ‘may’ and ‘might’ or ‘can and could’ have some of the parallels in Urdu but mostly they are created through inflections on the same word in Urdu and particularly in Pashto.

The Pashto language, as findings suggest, does not seem facilitating the learning of English language. The role of L2 (Urdu) is also ambiguous. However, the errors are more frequent when participants translate from Pashto to English as compared to the translation of text from Urdu to English which might suggest that Urdu works as linking language between Pashto and English. Nevertheless, it does not indicate any association of later languages, L2 and L3 in this case as being foreign and hence, remote from the native language as De Angelis (2007) suggested. Neither this difference is significant enough to assume that syntactic properties are more easily transferred from L2 than from L1 in TLA as Bardel and Falk (2007) acknowledging the typological reality, concluded in their study ‘The role of the second language in third language acquisition: the case of Germanic syntax’. Rather the notion of typology seems more accurate in the current scenario. Although three languages fall under the same language group yet there are many differences in the syntactic properties of these languages which seem to play a crucial role cross-linguistically.

More syntactic studies are required in this regard taking into account other syntactic properties and using different perspectives as well. It is important to note that Pashto speakers are deficient in the basic syntactic knowledge of English. Even if they have the content knowledge, they often remain unable to express it fully, which may have drastic impact on their academic achievement. The current research investigated the role of typology; however, psychotypology is another significant factor which may be examined in the future research to understand the perception of the Pashto speaker about the distance between these languages. The research has certain limitations as the researcher having not enough knowledge of Pashto language, at times got entangled into the intricacies of foreign language though three Pashto speakers who had their Master’s degree in English language were involved throughout in the study for guidance on Pashto language.

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